



California's protection & advocacy system

Discrimination Fact Sheet: Public Transportation

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Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) prohibits disability-based discrimination by public transportation services. Public transportation services include fixed route systems such as city busses and light rails. Public transportation agencies cannot refuse to serve people with disabilities, and must provide them with reasonable accommodations (also called “reasonable modifications”) that they need to use their services.

ADA Title II – Public Transportation Services

The Department of Transportation regulates the ADA rules that apply to transportation. Below is a list of some, but not all, requirements for a public transportation agency to comply with ADA. Visit the Federal Transit Administration’s webpage about ADA for more information: <https://www.transit.dot.gov/regulations-and-guidance/civil-rights-ada/americans-disabilities-act>

Requirements for Buses and Vans for Fixed Route Systems:

Stop Announcements:

- A bus operator must announce transfer points, major intersections, destination points, and other points so that people with vision and other disabilities understand their location.
- A bus operator must announce any stop when requested by a rider with a disability.

Destination information on vehicles:

- Vehicles must have destination and route information on the front and boarding side of a vehicle. This is particularly important when vehicles that offer different routes use the same stop.
- Destination and Route information must be announced to ensure that people with vision or other disabilities know which vehicle to board.

Lifts and Ramps:

- Vehicles must have a device, such as a ramp or a lift, to allow a passenger who uses a wheelchair access to board the vehicle. Lifts must be able to accommodate a minimum of 600 pounds and must be able to accommodate a wheelchair measuring 30 inches by 48 inches.
- Passengers using wheelchairs, walkers, crutches, canes, braces or who are otherwise unable to use steps must be allowed to use the lift

Fare box:

- Fare boxes must be placed so that they do not obstruct passenger flow onto the bus

Handrails:

- Handrails inside the vehicle must be accessible to people outside the vehicle upon entering the vehicle. The handrail must be accessible for the entire process of boarding, which includes when the passenger is depositing their fare into the fare box.

Stop Request:

- Pull chords or buttons should be within reach of a person in a wheelchair and should not require “tight grasping, pinching, or twisting of the wrist.”

Service Animals:

- People with disabilities have the right to bring service animals, but not emotional support animals, on public transportation. Service animals are dogs that are trained to perform disability-related work or tasks for people with disabilities.

Requirements for Rapid Rail Vehicle Systems

- Each rapid rail train must have at least one car that is readily accessible and usable to individuals with disabilities including individuals in wheelchairs.
- Handrails must be provided to assist with on- and off-boarding, maneuverability within the vehicle, and seating and standing.

Requesting Reasonable Modifications from a Public Transit Agency

Each public transportation entity is required to have a process for people with disabilities to request reasonable modifications to the agency's policies and practices in order to make the service as usable to them as to people who do not have disabilities. The modification request process must be described through the same method that the transit company uses to communicate its practices and policies to the general public. For example, if a transit company uses its website to communicate its policies and practices, the process for requesting modifications must also be included on the website. Additionally, the modification request process must be accessible to people with disabilities.

When feasible, it is best to request reasonable accommodations in advance using the sample request and support letters at the end of this fact sheet. If making a request for reasonable accommodations request ahead of time is not feasible, you can ask the vehicle operator for the accommodations that you need.

A request for reasonable accommodations made by a person with a disability may be denied **ONLY** for the following reasons:

- The request is not necessary to allow the person to use the public transportation system;
- Granting the request would fundamentally alter the nature of the services, programs or activities; or
- Granting the request would create a threat to the health or safety of others.

Complaint Process for Public Transit Agencies:

The Federal Transit (FTA) Office of Civil Rights is the agency that receives complaints regarding ADA violations of local transit agencies. If you believe that an ADA violation has occurred, the FTA Office of Civil Rights recommends that you file a complaint directly with the local public transit agency to give the local agency the opportunity to correct or respond to your concern(s), before filing a complaint with the FTA.

The Department of Transportation (DOT) requires that each local transit agency have a complaint process. You can locate your local agency's complaint process by contacting them directly or by visiting their website if they have one.

If the local agency is unresponsive to your concern, then you may decide to file a complaint with the FTA Office of Civil Rights by completing a form and mailing it:

You can obtain a complaint form at this link:

https://www.transit.dot.gov/sites/fta.dot.gov/files/docs/Consolidated_Civil_Rights_Complaint_Form.pdf

In addition to the form, the complaint you send it should include the following:

- A summary of your allegations and any supporting documentation
- Sufficient details for an investigator to understand why you believe a public transit provider has violated your rights, with specifics such as dates and times of incidents.
- Any related correspondence from the transit provider.

Mail the completed form and any attachments to the below address:

Federal Transit Administration
Office of Civil Rights
Attention: Complaint Team
East Building, 5th Floor – TCR
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590

- You must file an FTA complaint within 180 days of the act of discrimination.

If you have questions about filing a complaint, you can reach the FTA's Office of Civil Rights at 1-888-446-4511 or via email at FTA.ADAAssistance@dot.gov(link sends e-mail)

Sample Letter to Request a Reasonable Accommodation

[Date]

Dear [Public Transportation Provider]:

I am writing to request reasonable accommodations for my disability/disabilities.

I [am/would like to be] a customer of [Transportation Provider]. Because of my disability, I need the following accommodations: [list accommodations].

My [physician/psychiatrist/psychologist/therapist/social worker/occupational therapist /other individual (describe)] has deemed these accommodations necessary in light of my disability. Please see the attached letter from [doctor or professional's name].

Federal and state law require that businesses reasonably accommodate students and applicants who have disabilities. Please respond to this request by [date]. Feel free to contact me at [your phone number and/or email address] if you have any questions.

Thank you. Sincerely,

[Your name]

[Your address]

Sample Support Letter

[Date]

Dear [Public Transportation Provider]:

I am the [physician/psychiatrist/psychologist/therapist/social worker/occupational therapist] for [Name], and am familiar with his/her condition. [S/he] has a disability that causes certain functional limitations. These limitations include [list functional limitations that require the requested accommodation].

[The requested accommodation] is necessary for [Name] to use [name of public transportation]. [Describe how the accommodation will assist or support the individual].

Thank you for providing this reasonable accommodation for [Name].

Sincerely,

[Name and Title]